

# **Social History of Medicine in Colonial India**

**John Bosco Lourdasamy**

**Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**IIT Madras**

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**Lecture 03**

## **TUTORIAL 1 – Terms related to colonialism**

Hello, welcome to the third lecture in our course and this is a different kind of a class. , it is actually not a lecture in the sense of taking a particular topic and dealing with it either at the introductory level or at the deeper level. So, this is what we call a tutorial class in the NPTEL system. So, in our case what we will do is basically we will discuss some words, some terms, some particular events related to colonialism because as I have been saying repeatedly, all of these things have to be seen in that larger context of colonialism which has several ramifications. So, we will discuss those kinds of words and principles, events related to colonialism and the idea is basically to help in the additional readings because you are very welcome to do extra readings. You would have already seen a reading list in the course description.

So, this is particularly important if we are talking about people who do not have formal history background as I said in the beginning, this is a history course, but in the NPTEL system there is no restriction on only these kinds of people can take these kinds of courses. Anyone who is interested, who feels confident about doing this course, just out of curiosity people can join and then enroll. Therefore, the entire course itself is different because the speaker, the instructor does not know for sure who is on the other side unlike in a class where I know this is MA history, they have all done BA history or some related discipline, I know where to pitch. So, that is something I have to bear in mind when I am doing this course and that is something you should also bear in mind.

So , you should not be laughing: oh what is this, now he is coming and telling us what is colony, what is presidency and all that -because this course may actually be taken by a pathologist or an embryologist. So, he or she may not be sure about what is crown rule and the difference between crown rule and company rule. So, we have to keep those things also in mind and sometimes, say for instance you may be a very good history student, but you may not know what is nosology, there is another lecture where I have to introduce some such technical terms. So that is what this tutorial is meant to do. Please do not laugh, if you find some of these things too basic. But, as I said, we do not know

who is taking this course and we try our best to address as many constituencies as possible. And, as I said colonialism is one thing we should not forget, but what is a colony? Many of us think, when you think of colony you say: oh Sri Lanka was a colony, Tanzania was a colony, India was a colony, but colony does not mean just necessarily that.

Colony is a group of something existing, it can be - we have very often heard of - a white ant colony in that place which is very destructive to the floor or the wood there or we talk about defence colony, for instance in Delhi we have Defence Colony, where defence people live together. And we have got all kinds of colonies - in villages which all have very different meanings. But here, of course, we know which colony we are talking about, political colony or commercial colony, which basically means a group of people from a particular place or a race living in another place, another country - like the British coming, people coming and setting up a colony here. Or it can mean the land also - colony is an area, country, a land occupied and controlled by settlers from another country. And, of course, there are different kinds of colonies, in this kind of colony - these acts of political colonization, there are what are called settler colonies and non-settler colonies.

An example of non-settler colonies is for instance India - the British of course came here and they were here running the show for a considerable period of time - about two centuries and more, initially as traders and later on as rulers. But even as rulers - almost two centuries - they eventually left and the country by and large is at least inhabited by the Indians, people would have all along been here unlike in some places like say the United States of America or New Zealand or Australia or South Africa where the colonizers settled for the long haul and they had their descendants and they form a substantial part or in fact they form the major part like in USA where the people, the colonizers came from different parts of Europe and they very nearly exterminated - if not totally - but supplanted to a great extent the local indigenous population - the red Indians and other indigenous tribes, who were pushed to the margins. And now it looks more like the country of those who came from outside. So, those are examples of settler colonies. For instance, in India we hardly have any from the British times living here in big chunks. There may be some traces through what we call Anglo-Indians and Eurasians. But we don't have the kind of English presence, order of descendants as we see in places

like Australia. And, in our case, as I said, this course is, by and large, dealing with the British colonialism - because as we all know, there were also others who were in the colonial game here - the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese and even the Danes, - the Danish, but we will be dealing mostly with the British colonialism. Of course, there are also personnel - doctors and surgeons - who are not British. We will come across some of them in the course, but by and large, it is the British colonialism we are talking about. And that started with the East India Company - the English East India Company - starting from the early 1600s - they came with a charter from the British Parliament. The charter was a kind of a license to the company - the EIC - to trade. And once they arrived here, they set up what are called factories - factories in places like Surat or Masulipatnam. But we have to be careful with the word 'factory' here - because now in common parlance and in our current understanding, factory means a place where things are produced. And that is a very important point - like in the colonial game itself where the colonizers were not too keen to enhance local production or promote local industry. So, you might be surprised: what is this - like they set up factories so early? This is not the factory that we know. Here factory basically means a place where they stored things temporarily once goods arrived before being distributed into the hinterland or raw materials brought from the hinterland and stored there before being shipped out - so basically what you would call a warehouse. These factories - be careful - these are basically warehouses. These were the first initial landed establishments and especially in the commercial context. But after the Battle of Plassey which many of you would have heard of - 1757 - it is an important year and that is the battle in which the British, the English East India Company army defeated the Nawab of Bengal and assumed control over substantial areas of Bengal - that is - a political control. After that, we see the commercial players becoming more and more politically involved and acquiring ever more territories - Bengal first and then, all the way the other side - battles with the Sikhs, the Marathas and Rajputs and all kinds of people. But some of these who were defeated were allowed to run their own affairs. Of course, they could not have any considerable army or that kind of presence. They were kind of - in that sense - made impotent - in a military sense - but by and large, allowed to run their own affairs and their administration - but under the watchful eye of a Resident. A British resident would be in the court of those rulers who were allowed to rule - in this way - with this kind of arrangement. These kinds of entities were called princely states - with the Raja or the Nizam or the Maharaja or whatever they were called. For instance, the princely states of Travancore, Cochin - each of their courts will have a British resident who will take care to see that not too much and no kind of danger is brewing politically or militarily and also to influence various other things taking place there. Apart from this the parts of India - colonial India - which were directly ruled by the East India company itself was called British India and its main divisions were basically the three presidencies - the larger entities which were the Bombay, the Madras and the Bengal presidencies and there were several provinces like the United Provinces,

Central Provinces, Northwest Provinces and each of these provinces or presidencies had Governor or Lieutenant Governor and the 'Chief Executive' of this whole enterprise was the Governor General of India seated in Calcutta which was the headquarters of British India. And just to remind you, East India Company was a commercial company - which had its headquarters in London in Leaden Hall Street. In fact they also had a very well-furnished and funded library as well - with their materials and a good collection of books on various subjects including matters of science. Then as like any commercial company it had its own Court of Directors not only running the business - but also they had considerable power once they started acquiring more and more of political role and political control. The Court of Directors had power to nominate candidates for bureaucratic and military appointments including for instance IMS officers which we will see later. And in course of time, a Board of Control was also created. This was particularly to oversee the political affairs - it was also important to have this kind of oversight - the overseeing - because, in the colonial situation there was a stark asymmetry. There was a considerable asymmetry in power relationship and the British with all the advantages of their technologies and then other tools like divide-and-rule and all that - there was a lot of room for reckless exploitation, looting and raping and all kinds of excesses - which did happen and which did invite considerable attention of the press - there was considerable bad press. There were debates in British Parliament on these kinds of matters - the excesses. There was a need even at the level of the Parliament to have some kind of regular oversight and control on affairs related to India especially as more and more ruling function. And as more and more territories were acquired, there were various instrumentalities for it like for instance the Regulating Act, the Pitts India Act from time to time. There were also the Charter Acts of 1813 or 33 and on these were meant to be kind of course corrections - to kind of respond to the kind of complaints, the bad press that were coming out due to the excesses. And in spite of all of this, there were serious discontents because as I said, this is, all said and done, this is an exploitative relationship unequal power and commercial game - some of which contributed to the uprising of 1857 (Like 1757 and 1947 this is another important year - 1857) The Uprising is variously called as the Sepoy Mutiny (as a British would call it), or the First War of Indian independence (as nationalist historians would call it). Whatever way you call it, the fact of the matter is that there was brewing of discontent that blew out in a very open way due to several reasons but one of which was due to the pent-up anger due to the various acts of exploitation, the other kinds of excesses. And one of the immediate outcomes of this was now the British Parliament took a more even more serious view. Earlier we saw there were from time to time all kinds of instrumentalities and interventions through those various Charter Acts and other things. Now the British crown felt that there should be a more direct handling of affairs from their side and that was formulated through the Queen's proclamation of 1858 which brought an end to the Company rule - the rule by the East India Company. And the Crown directly took over

the reins of the administration. That's why till 1857 we have 'Company rule' and from 1858 we have the 'Crown rule'. Earlier - as I said - the chief who was presiding over from Calcutta was called the Governor-General. From now on, of course he was still called the Governor-General but he was also called by this other important title called the Viceroy - as a representative of the crown - the royalty. One of the immediate outcomes of the Uprising was that the British now began to be more cautious in their dealings with India. They now understood that need for greater tightening up of the security. In fact the English component of the army was increased and then of course there were also lots of reforms in the army also to enhance the security and they were also very cautious about interfering too much in the local affairs. Of course as I said initially they were reluctant to interfere into the local cultural affairs but as you will see sometime soon that policy changed sometime in the early part of the 19th century and they felt that this was also one of the reasons - among other things - which contributed to the Uprising. Therefore they adopted a more cautious attitude, and as I said, there was now more direct role for the British government in the affairs of India with the removal of the Company. Therefore there was what you can say a part of the British government - you can call it as a department of the British government looking after the India affairs. That was called the India Office and the person - you can consider this as equivalent to a Minister of that department - that was the Secretary of State for India again sitting in London. As I said, after 1858 the chief here was also called as the Viceroy and the first Viceroy was Lord Canning. Another significant development that happened in these administrative matters is that in 1911 the capital moved from Calcutta - the original headquarters - to Delhi and and as we all know the whole show came to an end in 1947 and the last Viceroy and Governor General was Lord Mountbatten. These are some basic outlines of British colonialism in India. Without these things it will be difficult to follow the course - because whatever material you read you will invariably come across the importance of the transfer from company rule to crown rule and all that. I think the people from non-history background should be very clear about all these basics but beyond these more physical and administrative aspects there are some things more serious. Of course as I said, we will keep coming again and again to the cultural aspects. Apart from all these commercial angles and the kinds of instrumentalities - the controls and Charter Acts and the reforms there was also talk about - at a total different level beyond the commerce and politics they were talking about - their role as civilizers - something in the light of modern civilization or taking civilization itself to the dark corners of the world. They spoke of the huge responsibility divinely ordained on them called the 'civilizing mission' or the 'white man's burden' - white man given the onerous job and the burden of going around the world taking the light of reason, knowledge and civilization to people living in all kinds of 'darkness' - for lifting them from 'barbarity to civilization', 'darkness to light', 'crudeness to sophistication'. All these claims aside, as I said, as rulers, to start with, the British for other reasons, quite smartly did not start meddling too much with

local cultural matters. As I was saying in an earlier lecture wherever you go - even you or me - we should be more cautious about not trying to overturn too many apple carts too soon or stepping on too many wrong toes too soon - to our discomfort and disadvantage. Therefore there was that initial hesitation - also there was that need to create a class of trustworthy local class of Indians - we have to keep people in good humor, you should not be appearing to be bulldozing - or be a kind of road roller trying to overrun things. Things have to be done initially in a very smooth way. Keep that in mind whether marriage or administration. That's an important point to keep in mind : you don't try to change your husband or your wife overnight ("I will change her / I will change him in one week" "I will bring her to my way "). That won't work - it will end up in all kinds of unfortunate results. That explains the principle of not only just of non interference: in fact as I said ..in the initial days you have to keep people in good humor.. your boyfriend or girlfriend or people you are called upon to preside over.. It's good to keep them in good confidence, earn their confidence.. sometimes you have to give lollipops - a physical chocolate or metaphorically you have to give them a lot of goodies and something which makes them feel comfortable which makes them feel that you are not a danger, you're not a predator but someone who is interested. So that's why they went one step further not only non-interference and avoidance, but also proactively went and patronised indigenous learning, setting up institutions for promotion of Sanskrit promotion of Arabic learning, interest in Islamic lore and those kinds of things. But as it happens to all of us also, once we feel secure, once we feel that we have got a very secure footing, then we feel very confident to try needling here and there - trying to change. That's what, as I said, from the early 19th century onwards after expanding considerably and settling down reasonably well, there was a new confidence and a new urge. One of the interesting and important ways in which this was reflected was in the Anglicist-Orientalist debate - I will just take a minute to define what this is this is like in the early 19th century say the 1810 and 1820s. Now, as I said, by this time they had acquired considerable amount of territory and quite settled down. There was a feeling they were there for the long haul and therefore they had a responsibility and a kind of a road map to run India in particular ways. And this, for instance, was a debate about the kind of education now which is a public responsibility - it's a responsible government - or that's what they claimed.. they have the responsibility of 'public' this, 'public' that : public health, public education.. How do you dole out public education? Should we educate Indians in their own vernacular languages say Telugu, Tamil or Hindi or Persian or whatever and teach them their own traditional lore? their Puranas, Mahabharata, their literature, their Kalidasas, Thirukural or things like that. If you are on that side if you are saying that is what you should do... that's the Orientalist side. Who are the anglicists? The anglicists felt : "no we have a responsibility towards Indians, we are not here to dole out more of what they already had.. we are on a civilizing mission.. we have to give them better reason, knowledge, light, new light .. we should teach them -

not their language but our language.. we should give them the benefit of English education.. we should give them the benefit of modern science we should bring them, we should teach them Milton, Newton, Shakespeare, Chaucer and other such things - modern science, modern medicine - all that these were the Anglicists. But one thing we should bear in mind is that it is not like the Anglicists were all British and on the Orientalist side were the Indians. Both sides - some of the staunchest Orientalists were westerners and on the Anglicist side we had people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who were very much in favor of (Raja Ram Mohan Roy in spite of himself being oriental scholar - oriental means like things related to the Orient the non-western world - he was a scholar of Sanskrit and Persian and all that, but he was very much in favor of) English education and modern science all that. He was a very staunch Anglicist. This was going on for some decades and finally that issue was settled in 1835. But the 1830s themselves are an important period that's also because - because individuals also matter as much as we don't want history to be based too much on heroes but the individuals do matter especially those on the top especially in cases like this - we had a Governor General called Lord William Bentinck who had this particular reforming zeal and he did considerable things of lasting significance - like for instance the abolition of Sati happened during his Governor Generalship and of course the during the same William Bentinck's Governor Generalship only the Anglicist-Orientalist debate was resolved through the Macaulay's Minute Macaulay was a law member of the Governor General's Council. He introduced this Minute - this piece of legislation - which said.. which tilted the balance.. which settled the score in favor of the Anglicist side. That in fact explains why I am talking to you now in English which is neither the language of me nor majority of you from India who are watching this. You know this can be, what is happening right now.. this very moment can be attributed to 1835 to Macaulay and Bentinck and that Anglicist-Orientalist debate. This is just an example of how the colonizers not just doing commerce and business and how once they took up administration they had many things through which they could leave lasting impact as we are feeling it even now. All this was further augmented when they had further new facilities like railways and new forms of transport, more rapid methods of reaching to people and which meant greater penetration of the landscape and more and more economic social and cultural aspects of life were touched. Then, this is a far cry from the original non-interference standoffish safe distance. This is something you have to bear in mind. This also added to the pent-up feelings which caused 1857 - because there are several reasons but this was also there. These are some of the broad lineaments of colonialism. These are some of the political, cultural aspects which you should keep in mind - especially for generalists to understand the rest of this course. Hope you found this useful. Similarly we will do such things - such tutorials from time to time. For instance we will have one where we will have all the medical terms, which for instance, historians will not be familiar with that . We will try to do everything possible to make

this journey nice and smooth for everyone. With that we close now today for this lecture see you in the next one. Take care bye bye.